

# HIP HOP

#hiphophavanaberlin



## HAVANA BERLIN



**URBAN COUNTER-CULTURES AND SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS IN THE BLACK ATLANTIC**

**CONTRA-CULTURAS URBANAS Y MOVIMIENTOS  
SOCIALES EN EL ATLÁNTICO NEGRO**

**Symposium/Festival: July 29–30, 2022**

Curated by Matti Steinitz (Center for InterAmerican Studies)

Idea: Prof. Julia Roth & Roberto Zurbano

Hosted by: **S A V V Y CONTEMPORARY  
THE LABORATORY OF FORM-IDEAS**

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# #HIPHOPHAVANABERLIN

We are pleased to introduce this two-day symposium/festival that has been a long time in the making. After several attempts, which did not come about due to the unfavorable conditions of the last two years, we are now glad to welcome more than 30 activists, musicians, artists, and scholars from the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa to this gathering that will focus on the multiple connections between Havana and Berlin through the lens of hip-hop. Our event is intended to become a space of dialogue on the parallels and differences that have accompanied the translation of this genre from its origins in Black and Puerto Rican New York to Cuban and German contexts. This comparative look at the social meanings of hip-hop in Berlin and Havana will focus on the little-noticed political and cultural flows between two cities that share not only a recent history shaped by Cold War dynamics, but also their roles as important sites of the Black Atlantic.

In both contexts, the meaning of hip-hop transcends that of a music genre. Rather, it has acted as temporal and geographical bridge that not only connected younger generations with sonic, aesthetic, and political representations of the 1960s and 1970s Black Power movement but also facilitated the forging of alliances between African Americans and diasporic communities beyond U.S. borders. Thus, over the last three decades, hip-hop in Havana and Berlin has become an important platform for the articulation of anti-racist, feminist, and social critique. In Germany, hip-hop played a crucial role as young migrants and Black Germans fought back against a wave of racist and nationalist violence after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Cuba, the rise of hip-hop in the "período especial" of the 1990s ended decades of enforced silence by Black dissidents and gave voice to the growing discontent of Afro-Cuban youth most affected by the island's persistent socioeconomic inequalities and institutional racism. Currently, Afro-Cuban rappers are at the forefront of a movement for human rights and freedom of expression, for which some are punished with draconian prison sentences and others are forced into exile. As will be shown through the examples of Havana and Berlin, hip-hop is deeply rooted in the Black Atlantic tradition of transnational exchange, in which Black popular music plays a key role in anti-racist liberation struggles and the formation of solidarity networks between geographically distant places of the African Diaspora.

Based on an initiative by Afro-Cuban intellectual Roberto Zurbarano and Prof. Julia Roth and a collaboration between Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Goethe-Institut, Transcultural/UNESCO, Black Americas Network and Center for InterAmerican Studies (Bielefeld University) , #hiphophavanaberlin at SAVVY Contemporary is dedicated to the social and transnational dimensions of hip-hop as a "diasporic lingua franca" (El-Tayeb). On both days activists from Afro-German and Afro-Cuban movements, members of the Havana and Berlin hip-hop scenes, artists, street dancers, and scholars will engage in a dialogue about the significance of hip-hop for global Afro-diasporic counter-discourses and anti-racist resistance in lectures, panel discussions, film screenings, and live performances.

It's about time to get this conversation started!

**Matti Steinitz (curator)**

# #HIPHOPHAVANABERLIN

Es un placer introducir este simposio/festival de dos días, que ha estado mucho tiempo en preparación. Después de varios intentos, que no llegaron a concretarse debido a las condiciones desfavorables de los últimos dos años, ahora estamos más que contentos de recibir a más de 30 activistas, músicos, artistas y académicos del Caribe, Europa y África a este encuentro que se centrará en las múltiples conexiones entre La Habana y Berlín desde la perspectiva del hip-hop. Nuestro evento pretende convertirse en un espacio de diálogo sobre los paralelismos y diferencias que han acompañado la traslación de este género desde sus orígenes en el Nueva York negro y puertorriqueño hasta los contextos cubano y alemán. Esta mirada comparativa a los significados sociales del hip-hop en Berlín y La Habana se centrará en los flujos políticos y culturales poco estudiados entre dos ciudades que comparten no sólo una historia reciente marcada por las dinámicas de la Guerra Fría, sino también su papel como importantes sitios del Atlántico Negro.

En ambos contextos, el significado del hip-hop trasciende el de un género musical. Más bien, ha actuado como puente temporal y geográfico que no sólo ha conectado a generaciones más jóvenes con las representaciones sonoras, estéticas y políticas del movimiento Black Power de los años 60 y 70, sino que también ha facilitado el establecimiento de alianzas entre afroamericanos y comunidades diaspóricas más allá de las fronteras de Estados Unidos. Así, en las últimas tres décadas, el hip-hop en La Habana y Berlín se ha convertido en una importante plataforma para la articulación de la crítica antirracista, feminista y social. En Alemania, el hip-hop desempeñó un papel crucial cuando jóvenes afro-alemanes e inmigrantes se enfrentaron a una ola de violencia racista y nacionalista tras la caída del Muro de Berlín. En Cuba, el auge del hip-hop en el "período especial" de los años 90 puso fin a décadas de silencio forzado por parte de los disidentes negros y dio voz al creciente descontento de los jóvenes afrocubanos más afectados por las persistentes desigualdades socioeconómicas y el racismo institucional de la isla. En la actualidad, los raperos afrocubanos están a la cabeza de un movimiento por los derechos humanos y la libertad de expresión, por el que algunos son castigados con penas de prisión draconianas y otros se ven obligados a exiliarse. Como se mostrará a través de los ejemplos de La Habana y Berlín, el hip-hop está profundamente arraigado en la tradición del Atlántico Negro de intercambio transnacional, en la que la música popular negra desempeña un papel clave en las luchas de liberación antirracista y en la formación de redes de solidaridad entre lugares geográficamente distantes de la diáspora africana.

Basado en una iniciativa del intelectual afrocubano Roberto Zurbano y la profesora Julia Roth y una colaboración entre Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Goethe-Institut, Transcultura/UNESCO, Black Americas Network y Centro de Estudios InterAmericanos Studies (Universidad de Bielefeld), #hiphophavanaberlin en SAVVY Contemporary está dedicado a las dimensiones sociales y transnacionales del hip-hop como "lengua franca diaspórica" (El-Tayeb). Ambos días, activistas de los movimientos afroalemán y afrocubano, miembros de la escena hip-hop de La Habana y Berlín, artistas, bailarines callejeros y académicos entablarán un diálogo sobre la importancia del hip-hop para los contradiscursos afrodiaspóricos globales y la resistencia antirracista en conferencias, mesas redondas, proyecciones de películas y actuaciones en directo.

Ya es tiempo de iniciar esta conversación!

**Matti Steinitz (curador)**

# PARTICIPANTS



## Alexx A-Game

Alexx A-Game from Kingston, Jamaica is a solo artist, former lead singer and bass player of Di Blueprint band (2012 winners of the Global Battle of The Bands in London). He conceives music as a means to bridge gaps, break down borders, and build bridges that connect people, and cultures, and to further unite people.

## Sandra Heidl

is psychologist, journalist, editor and blogger from Havana who currently lives in Hanover, Germany. With her blog *Negra cubana tenía que ser* and as a founder and editor of the magazine *Afrocubanas*, she has become one of the leading voices of Cuban Afro-feminism, on the island and in the diaspora.



## Nana Asafu-Adjei

"I draw inspiration from my multinational life story: Germany, UK and Ghana. A reformation of our post-colonial structures is long overdue! Thus, I am politically active within the only anti-racist party in Germany: *Die Urbane. Eine Hip Hop Partei.*"



## Ricardo Bacallao

is a Cuban-American independent filmmaker who obtained his Master of Fine Arts from the University of New York in 2012 and is currently based between New York and Berlin. His narrative films and documentaries, which have been presented at international film festivals such as Berlinale, deal with cultural and political dimensions of Cuban and Black diasporas in Berlin, New York, and beyond.



## Sandra Bello

is a Berlin-based Pan-Africanist who started her life of transnational activism as an organizer in Rio de Janeiro's 1980s Black movement. In Berlin, she founded the anti-racist initiative QuilomboAllee and has become an important voice in the city's Black and Brazilian diaspora movements, deeply involved in local and international solidarity activism



## Alessandra Borchì

is the Coordinator of the Transcultura Programme within the UNESCO Regional Office for Culture in Havana since August 2021. She has been working in the UNESCO Offices in Kabul and Dar-es-Salaam, in the Executive Office of the Assistant Director-General for Culture and in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit.



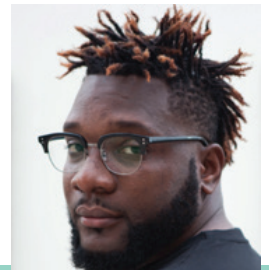
## Reinaldo Carrión García

is a photographer who began documenting graffiti art in his hometown of Havana over 10 years ago. Since then, he has built up a large collection of photographs of the graffiti works of Havana's sprayer scene, making an important contribution to the visibility of the Cuban hip-hop movement



## Delma T1

is a hip-hop band music from the Dominican Republic, lead by Cesar Berigue Delma. With their socially conscious lyrics they represent the struggle of Dominicans of Haitian descent as a community who have been suffering systematic discrimination and rights violations over the elimination of their citizen identification and voting credentials.



## Michelle Ferreira aka Mica

is a B-Girl from Brazil who came to Berlin as a participant in the exchange project "CITY OF HIP HOP - São Paulo meets Berlin." As a member of the collective HIGH FIVE she has been active in hip-hop culture for over 10 years, developing cultural projects with the aim of promoting female production and anti-racist practices in Berlin.



## Jamal Kamano aka konTa

is an activist and MC of Guinean descent with a history of forced migrations experiences which have brought him to Germany via the USSR and Lebanon. He has not only a long record of performing but is also involved in several youth projects where hip-hop is used as a tool for education and empowerment. Also, he is an active member of *Die Urbane. Eine Hip-Hop Partei.*



## Kana & Mavie

is a MC duo formed in 2011 by "Kornkreis Mafia" members Freddy Kana & Mavie Gagnoa who grew up in southern Germany as the sons of fathers from Cameroon and the Ivory Coast. Their lyrics and musical styles are centered around their Pan-African identities, as is reflected in their "Southside Negusat" EP and their debut album "Direktion Timbuktu" which they released after having relocated to Berlin in 2018.



## Verda Kaya

was born in Turkey and grew up in Berlin. Since the 1990s, she has been working as an ethnologist on the transnational connection of Hip-Hop between Berlin and Istanbul. She works as a curator and has, among other things, curated the hip hop section in the Berlin Global exhibition at the Humboldt Forum.



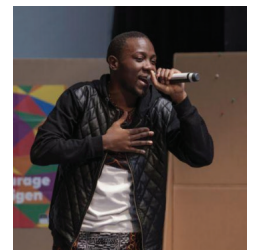
## Ayamey Mc Lean

is a photographer from Havana whose work centers around the realities of Cuba's Black community and is regularly published in *Afrocubanas. La Revista*. Her selection is titled "Dolor y Fe" (Pain and Faith), referring to Afro-Cubans' history of enslavement/racialization, and the constant struggle to overcome barriers against all odds.



## Matondo

was born in Berlin as the son of a refugee family from Congo. As a teenager he began to create his own lyrics and started to work as a Hip-Hop teacher, using music as an educational tool in his social work and workshops with young people, students and prisoners. His texts deal with resistance, racism, police violence and global injustices.



## MC Josh

was born in Berlin in 1990. She raps in German, and her lyrics deal with topics ranging from women's rights to social injustice. Her participation in international musical exchange projects has already brought MC Josh to New York, St. Petersburg, Cairo, Paris, and Prague.





## Nilo MC

is an MC and DJ from Havana who currently lives between Barcelona and Berlin. He has released songs and performed with internationally acclaimed stars as Orishas, Vieja Trova Santiaguera, and Manu Chao and his first album "Guajiro Del Asfalto" was nominated for the Latin Grammy Award for Best Urban Music Album in 2002.

## Emilio O'Farrill

is an independent artist and antiracist activist living in Havana, who investigates and promotes Afro-Cuban visual arts. He is also the general coordinator of AFROARTE, member of the Red Barrial Afrodescendiente and a community organizer in the neighborhood La Marina de Matanzas.



## Sigrid Yanara Palacios Castillo

was born and raised in Colombia. She holds a Ph.D. from Bielefeld University and has dedicated more than a decade to analyzing the musical expressions of the Afro-Colombian Pacific communities, connecting the dots between social innovation and cultural policies.

## René Peña

is a photographer from Havana who has presented his work in various exhibitions in Cuba, the US, and Europe. His work consists of putting together stagings based on personal interpretations of social issues that interest him.



## La Reyna y la Real

is a Havana-based rap duo that emerged in 2012. It is their declared aim to empower female rappers in a genre dominated by men. Hip-Hop is the basis of their alternative music, which blends influences from jazz, son and reggae. Sensitivity and strength are the defining characteristics of La Reyna y la Real in their lyrics and unique performances.

## Rodolfo Rensoli

is a producer, composer, and artist from Havana. As founder of Grupo Uno and the first "Festival de Rap Cubano" in 1995 he is widely recognized as a leading figure in the emergence of Cuban Hip-Hop as an autonomous and independent platform for Afro-Cuban youth.



## Aracely Rodríguez

is a feminist and anti-racist researcher and activist from Havana who holds a M.A. in Caribbean Studies and a PhD in Philosophy. She was founder of the feminist initiative *Hormigas* and member of *El Clúv del Esendrú* where she coordinated workshops on feminism and the social history of black people in Cuba.

## Julia Roth

is a researcher and author currently based at the university of Bielefeld where she is also director of the Center for Interamerican Studies (CIAS). Her work focuses on postcolonial and decolonial, intersectional feminist and gender studies approaches as well as music as feminist knowledge. Alongside her academic work, she organizes cultural-political events.





## Christoph Schaub

teaches German literature and cultural studies at the University of Vechta and was previously a lecturer at Columbia and Duke. His research focuses on literary and cultural globalization, urban culture, literature and class, and Afro-diasporic popular music.

## Afibola Sifunola

is a spoken word artist and activist from Havana who is committed to the visibilization of Afro-feminist and LGBTQA demands and struggles. Afro-Cuban culture and the participation in Cuba's hip-hop movement since her teenage years have shaped and inspired her performative poetry. In 2021, she represented Cuba internationally, winning the third place in the Poetry Slam of the Americas in Rio de Janeiro.



## Matti Steinitz

is a Berlin-based DJ, journalist, and researcher at the Center for InterAmerican Studies (Bielefeld University). He is also coordinator of the transdisciplinary Black Americas Network and his dissertation thesis on Soul music and the rise of Black Power in Afro-Latin America is forthcoming in 2022.

## Michael Thoss

has been the representative of Goethe-Institut in Havana, where he organized multiple events and projects with Afro-Cuban artists such as "Culturas Caribeñas del Hip-Hop" with El Clúb del Esendrú in 2020. Prior to that, he worked in leading positions at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin.



## Carmel Zoum

is a dancehall singer and techno/drum'n'bass DJ, based in Berlin. A versatile Congolese/French artist flowing in French, English and Lingala, Carmel Zoum is a fiery force of nature on the mic, thrilling dancefloors worldwide with her groovy, beautiful melodies and hardcore Afro-dancehall vibes.

## Roberto Zurbano

is a cultural critic, writer, and antiracist activist from Havana. He has published widely on matter of race in Cuba and directed the Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, until he was dismissed for his article on racism in Cuba in The New York Times. He was also one of the founding editors of Cuba's first hip-hop magazine *Movimiento*.



## La Regla

is Berlin's longest-running Latino sound system (est. 1998) and has now already become an important institution of social life for several generations of Latin American migrants living in this city. Run by DJs Bongo and El Vago, La Regla parties are a must for lovers of vintage and fresh tropical sounds.

## Black Atlantic Beatz

is a Berlin-based soundsystem founded by DJ Matatu in 2002. It is dedicated to the entangled sounds of the African Diaspora with a focus on vinyl records from the 1960s and 1970s. The sets of DJ Matatu and his guests take dancers on a hemispheric journey to the roots of hip-hop, connecting Soul & Funk with Afrobeat, Latin Boogaloo, Salsa, Cumbia, Calypso, Samba, and more.



# PROGRAM

## Friday 29th July

### 10 – 11:00. Welcome address and introduction:

Matti Steinitz (Black Americas Network/Center for InterAmerican Studies); Julia Roth (Center for InterAmerican Studies) Michael Thoss (Goethe-Institut); Alessandra Borchì (UNESCO Transcultural Programme)

### 11 – 12:00. Keynote: Roberto Zurbarano (Havana): "Music and Resistance in the Black Atlantic"

Presentation of slideshow exhibitions by photographers René Peña, Ayamey MacLean & Reinaldo Carrión García (Havana)

### 12 – 13:00. Lunch

### 13 – 15:00. Roundtable: "Rap Cubano: From the 1990s to the present"

- Rodolfo Rensoli (artist, producer/Havana)
- Sandra Heidl (blogger/Havana-Hannover)
- Afibola Sifunola (spoken word artist/Havana)

### 15:30 – 17:00. Roundtable: "Hip-Hop as 'diasporic lingua franca' in Berlin"

- Michelle Ferreira aka Mica (B.girl/Berlin-São Paulo)
- Jamal Kamano (MC/Die Urbane. Eine Hip-Hop Partei/ Berlin)
- Christoph Schaub (researcher/Berlin)
- Verda Kaya (curator/Berlin)

### 18 – 19:00. Dinner

### 19 – 21:00. #hiphophavanaberlin in concert

- Afibola Sifunola (Havana)
- konTa & dj APE (Berlin)
- Matondo (Berlin)

### 21:00. TRANSCULTURA live: "Hip-Hop from the Caribbean"

- Alexx A-Game (Jamaica)
- Delma T1 (República Dominicana)

## Saturday 30th July

### 10 – 12:00. TRANSCULTURA panel: "Hip-Hop in the Caribbean: Opportunities and Challenges"

- Alexx A-Game (Jamaica)
- Delma T1 (Dominican Republic)

### 12 – 13:00. Lunch

### 13 – 15:00. Roundtable: "Afro-diasporic dialogues: Anti-racist and black feminist movements in Havana & Berlin"

- Roberto Zurbarano (writer & activist / Havana)
- Aracely Rodríguez (researcher/Havana)
- Sandra Bello (activist/ QuilomboAllee/ Berlin-Rio de Janeiro)
- Nana Asafu-Adjei (activist/ Die Urbane. Eine Hip-Hop Partei /Hamburg)

### 15:30 – 17:30. Film screening & discussion

- "Short Radiography of Hip Hop in Cuba" (2004) and presentation of the film project "Cuban Hip-Hop and the Global Left"
- Q&A with director Ricardo Bacallao (Havana/ Berlin) and Rodolfo Rensoli (Havana)

### 18 – 19:00. Dinner

### 19:00. #hiphophavanaberlin in concert (part 2)

- MC Josh (Berlin)
- Kana & Mavie (Berlin)
- La Reyna y la Real (Havana)
- Nilo MC (Havana/Berlin)
- Carmel Zoum (Berlin)

### 23:00. After Show Party

- Bongo & Vago [La Regla]
- DJs Matatu [Black Atlantic Beatz]

**Contact:** [matti.steinitz@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:matti.steinitz@uni-bielefeld.de);  
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